

★ news release

Most 343-5634

Waterfowl were more concentrated in the northern part of the flyway due to snow and ice cover. The lack of snow from Illinois southward made waste grain available and surface water from rains helped distribute the birds. Generally, wintering areas appeared in excellent condition.

Fewer dabbling ducks were observed in the north, but more were seen farther south. Diving ducks decreased moderately in Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee, but increased considerably in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Arkansas.

The numbers of geese observed were about the same as last year, with fewer snow geese in Iowa and Missouri, greater numbers of Canada geese in Missouri and Illinois.

Central Flyway

Late December storms and cold forced birds into favorable habitat in New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. Kansas drought forced waterfowl to concentrate on large reservoirs. Water levels were below normal in Nebraska, and most water areas were partly or completely frozen.

Availability of grain was restricted by snow cover in Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Wyoming. Food and habitat were good to excellent in Montana and in southern Texas, where grainfields had not been plowed.

Dabbling ducks in the flyway showed a slight to moderate increase over those seen last year, with greatest increases in Oklahoma and New Mexico. More divers were noted, mostly in redheads and ruddy ducks in Texas, indicating good conditions in coastal marshes and lagoons.

The number of geese increased slightly.

Pacific Flyway

Record rainfall in western Washington increased habitat. Natural aquatics were readily available in eastern Washington, but cultivation reduced the food supply. Food and water conditions were good in western Montana and Oregon, but poor in Nevada. The food supply was adequate in Idaho although water levels were generally low.

An early rice harvest followed by burning and plowing greatly reduced available food in California. Utah had poor food and water prior to the survey and inclement weather also forced waterfowl out. Drought hit southern Arizona and all lakes above 4,000 feet were frozen over, with birds concentrated on the springs and rivers in the north.

Dabbling ducks increased slightly from last year, mostly in California and Idaho. Divers seen were at the same level.

Excellent increases were noted in the goose population, with snow geese more than double last year's count, mostly in California and Nevada. The white-fronted goose numbers also doubled, while brant population showed no change.

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